

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05
IGA-02 MCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00
OMB-01 TRSE-00 SSO-00 /057 W
-----113019 061236Z /53
P 061031Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5257

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 2126

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, GY
SUBJECT: GUYANA'S PRIME MINISTER INQUIRES CONCERNING C-130 AIRCRAFT

1. AT THE CONCLUSION OF OUR MEETING LAST WEEK CONCERNING
THE INVITATION TO THE PANAMA CANAL TREATIES SIGNING
CEREMONY AND DISCUSSION OF OTHER MATTERS, PRIME MINISTER
BURNHAM ASKED ME WHETHER IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR GUYANA
TO PURCHASE A USED MILITARY SURPLUS "HERCULES" AIRCRAFT
(C-130). I RESPONDED THAT I DID NOT KNOW BUT WOULD PASS
HIS INQUIRY ON TO WASHINGTON.

2. BURNHAM EXPLAINED THAT GUYANA'S PRESENT TRANSPORT
AIRCRAFT WAS NOT ADEQUATE FOR TAKING HEAVY MACHINERY TO
THE INTERIOR OF GUYANA. EVEN TO TRANSPORT LAND ROVERS
OR JEEPS, THE TOPS HAD TO BE REMOVED FROM THE VEHICLES.
HEAVY EARTH MOVING EQUIPMENT HAD TO BE DISMANTLED
AND REASSEMBLED EVERY TIME IT WAS MOVED FROM ONE LOCATION
IN THE INTERIOR TO ANOTHER. THIS WAS EXTREMELY COSTLY
AND TIME CONSUMING. IT HINDERED GUYANA'S DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.

3. THE LACK OF ROADS LINKING THE COASTAL AREA NEAR
GEORGETOWN AND NEW AMSTERDAM WITH AGRICULTURAL AREAS
BEYOND LINDEN IN THE SOUTH OR ANYWHERE IN THE NORTH-WEST
DISTRICT MADE COLONIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THOSE
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AREAS DIFFICULT.

4. I RECOGNIZE THAT BURNHAM IS SPEAKING OF FMS AND
POSSIBLY CREDITS AND THIS WOULD REQUIRE THAT THE USG
MAKE A DECISION THAT IT WOULD BE IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST
TO MAKE SUCH SALES TO GUYANA. AS GUYANA'S INELIGIBILITY
TO RECEIVE MILITARY EQUIPMENT OF ANY KIND HAS BEEN A SORE

POINT WITH BURNHAM AND OTHER GOG LEADERS, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HE IS USING THIS ISSUE TO TEST THE ADMINISTRATION'S INTENTIONS TOWARD GUYANA. IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO THEM TO PERCEIVE THAT THEY ARE ON AN EQUAL BASIS WITH SURINAM IN THIS RESPECT.

5. GIVEN GUYANA'S CURRENT LACK OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE, THE SALE OF SURPLUS AIRCRAFT WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY REQUIRE CREDITS.

6. DURING PRE-UNGA CONSULTATIONS SEPTEMBER 2, FONMIN WILLS ALSO RAISED THE QUESTION OF GUYANA'S ELIGIBILITY FOR MFS SALES AND ASKED THAT THE EMBASSY SEEK TO MAKE GUYANA ELIGIBLE FOR PURCHASES. I MENTIONED TO HIM THE PRIME MINISTER'S REQUEST. HE REPLIED THAT BURNHAM HAD RAISED THE GENERAL ISSUE OF GUYANA'S ELIGIBILITY WITH HIM AND ASKED THAT HE TRY TO GET IT CLARIFIED. BURNHAM HAD NOT, HOWEVER, MENTIONED THE C-130 TO HIM.

7. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT GUYANA'S INTEREST IN MILITARY SALES IS PRIMARILY RELATED TO OBTAINING EQUIPMENT SUCH AS THE C-130 WHICH CAN BE USED FOR DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES. OF PERHAPS GREATER IMPORTANCE IS THE SYMBOLIC OR POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE TO GUYANA'S LEADERS WOULD BE A DETERMINATION BY THE US ADMINISTRATION THAT GUYANA IS ELIGIBLE ALONG WITH SURINAM AND GUYANA'S OTHER NEIGHBORS FOR PURCHASING OF EQUIPMENT.
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8. ACTION REQUESTED. EMBASSY RECOGNIZES THAT A DEFINITIVE ANSWER TO GUYANA'S REQUEST PROBABLY CAN NOT BE MADE IMMEDIATELY. WE WOULD, HOWEVER, APPRECIATE INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROVIDING AN INTERIM RESPONSE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, MILITARY AIRCRAFT, GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 06-Sep-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977GEORGE02126
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770321-1180
Format: TEL
From: GEORGETOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770996/aaaadcwd.tel
Line Count: 100
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 6323784d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1381418
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GUYANA'S PRIME MINISTER INQUIRES CONCERNING C-130 AIRCRAFT
TAGS: MASS, GY
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6323784d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009